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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget on its resumed twenty-second session

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on 17 September and 13 October 1993

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Attendance

GE.93-54370

INTRODUCTION

1. The resumed twenty-second session of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 17 September 1993 and on 13 October 1993.

2. In the course of the session, three plenary meetings were held.

Chapter I

REVIEW OF THE UNCTAD SECTION OF THE PROPOSED UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 AS SUBMITTED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

3. For its consideration of this item, the Working Party had before it the following documentation:

"Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. Part IV - International cooperation for development. Section 11A - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development" (A/46/6 (Sect. 11A)).

4. The **Chairman**, introducing the item, said that the programme narrative originally prepared by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and discussed by the Working Party at its April session had served as a basis for the proposed programme budget now before the Working Party. The proposed programme budget was currently being discussed by CPC and ACABQ in New York in preparation for its consideration by the Fifth Committee. Since the Working Party's discussions in April, important changes had occurred, namely the arrival in UNCTAD of the programmes on transnational corporations and on science and technology for development.

5. The **Working Party** decided to pursue its deliberations in an informal setting.

Outcome of the Working Party's deliberations

6. The **Chairman** said that, in the process of reviewing the UNCTAD Section 11 (a) of the proposed United Nations Programme Budget for 1994-1995, as submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the General Assembly (A/48/6), the Working Party noted that the proposed budget: incorporated almost all of the Working Party's recommendations for revising the draft programme narratives contained in document TD/B/WP(XXII)/CRP.1 of 13 April 1993; incorporated new programmes for transnational corporations and science and technology for development, the programme narratives of which had not been reviewed by the Working Party; allocated resources to the new programmes on transnational corporations and science and technology for development taking into account the need for economies of scale.

7. The Working Party further noted that the new restrictions applying to conference services had adversely affected the ability of the Trade and Development Board and its subsidiary bodies to deal with their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. This applied particularly to the provision of translation and interpretation services.

8. The Working Party requested that the Trade and Development Board request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to review in his monthly consultations all aspects relating to the provision of conference facilities and services with a view to making concrete proposals for improving the current situation. The

Working Party noted that such proposals needed to take into account the present financial situation of the United Nations.

9. The representative of the **United States of America** expressed regret that there had been so little time to discuss the budget, particularly given the current tight budgetary situation. He urged UNCTAD to look for ways of economizing in this time of austerity.

10. The representative of **Nepal**, speaking on behalf of the **least developed countries**, said that, in 1990 the General Assembly had decided to allocate a number of posts specifically to the Division for LDCs as additional resources, thus reflecting the greatly expanded mandate of UNCTAD given by the Paris Conference, the need to cover a substantially increased number of LDCs, and the high priority attached to the LDCs work programme. It was not clear to what extent the current staffing situation in the LDC Division reflected that additionality. While the current recruitment freeze might have affected the staffing situation, was UNCTAD contemplating asking for an exception to the recruitment freeze? The LDCs assured the Secretary-General of UNCTAD of their support in this regard in the Fifth Committee and elsewhere.

11. It was deeply worrisome that a number of senior-level professionals of the UNCTAD secretariat, including the LDCs Division, had been given additional responsibilities. That practice must not lead to any dilution of the focus on the monitoring of the Programme of Action.

12. The **Director of the Division for Programme Support and Management Services** said it was true that some staff members in the LDC Division were also working in the field of poverty alleviation, but the two areas were very much related. Two professional posts at the P.2/P.3 level were currently vacant in the LDC Division, but recruitment was going ahead through national examinations and no exemption from the recruitment freeze would be required.

13. The representative of **Nigeria** said that in UNCTAD activities, issues affecting developing countries and African countries in particular must be accorded the expected high priority.

14. The representative of **Finland** thanked the secretariat for the assurances provided during the Working Party's informal discussions with regard to the implementation of the tasks set as a result of the Cartagena Commitment, Agenda 21 and subsequent Board deliberations in respect of the environment, and in particular trade and environment.

Chapter II

OTHER BUSINESS

Consultations of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the role and functions of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and Programme Budget

15. The **Director, Division for Programme Support and Management Services**, informed the Working Party that the secretariat, in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Party, was preparing a background paper for the consultations. The initial version would be circulated to delegations and subsequently revised in the light of delegations' comments. It would be important to conclude the consultations before the end of the year, well before the next session of the Working Party.

16. The representative of **Peru** agreed that the terms of reference of the Working Party should be completed before the next session of the Working Party. The consultations on the terms of reference should be open to all interested member States.

17. The **Senior Legal Adviser** said that, once the terms of reference were agreed upon at the Secretary-General's consultations, they could be applied provisionally pending their formal adoption by the Trade and Development Board.

Expansion of the membership of the Working Party

18. The representative of **Peru**, supported by the representative of **Argentina**, said that the Latin American and Caribbean Group would be interested in the possibility of expanding the membership of the Working Party to allow more countries of the Group to become members.

19. The representative of **Norway** said that interest among Group B countries in membership of the Working Party was increasing. The main thing was to retain the open-ended nature of Working Party meetings.

20. The **Chairman** said that the question of expanding the membership of the Working Party should be pursued within the framework of the consultations on the Working Party's role and functions.

Documentation

21. The representative of **Argentina** said that the failure to produce pre-session documentation in time in all official languages hampered the work of the Board and its subsidiary bodies. If the problem was one of resources, the Working Party could discuss the question of increasing resources in the appropriate services. If it was a management problem, the secretariat should take the necessary measures. However, the problem must be dealt with.

22. The **Secretary of the Trade and Development Board** said that problems had arisen both in UNCTAD and in UNOG, but the situation had become particularly serious because of the financial crisis faced by the Organization. The Board

had adopted rules concerning documentation and postponement of meetings in its resolution 352 (XXXIV).

23. **The Chairman** said that the issue should be discussed by the Board or the Consultations of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, but any funding implications resulting from such discussion would have to be discussed by the Working Party.

Chapter III

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Bureau

24. The Bureau of the Working Party at its resumed twenty-second session was as originally elected at the opening meeting of the twenty-second session on 5 April 1993, namely:

Chairman: Mr. Michael Mugliston (Australia)

Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur: Mr. José Perez Gabilondo (Argentina)

B. Adoption of the agenda

25. At the first part of its resumed session, on 17 September 1993, the Working Party adopted the agenda for its resumed session, as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Review of the UNCTAD section of the proposed United Nations programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 as submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the General Assembly

3. Other business

C. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

26. At its 102nd plenary meeting, on 13 October 1993, the Working Party decided that the report on its resumed twenty-second session should be prepared and circulated after the close of the session under the authority of the Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur.

Annex

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE 1/

1. The following States members of UNCTAD, members of the Working Party, were represented at the session:

Argentina
Australia
Bulgaria
China
Egypt
Finland
Germany
India
Japan
Nepal
Nigeria
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Russian Federation
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Venezuela

2. The following other States members of UNCTAD, not members of the Working Party, were represented as observers at the session:

Algeria
Austria
Bangladesh
Belgium
Costa Rica
Denmark
Ecuador
France
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Lebanon
Madagascar
Malaysia
Mexico
Myanmar
Netherlands
Norway
Senegal
Slovakia
Spain
Switzerland
Thailand
Tunisia

1/ For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP/INF.28/Rev.1.

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